

# Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/1917

23 December 2022

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**Applications:** DC/2022/01391

**Site:** Southport Theatre & Convention Centre Floral Hall Promenade Southport PR9 0DZ

**Proposals:** Demolition of existing buildings/structures on site; remediation works; foundation/piling works; and other associated engineering works to accommodate the development of a Theatre/Events Auditorium (Sui Generis) and Exhibition/Convention Centre (Sui Generis/Use Class F1e) with integral offices and production facilities (Use Class Eg(i)), meeting rooms, ticket office/retail concessions (Use Class Ea), cafe and restaurant (Class Eb), and food & drink concessions (internal/external) (Class Eb/Sui Generis); External Water & Light Show (with associated engineering works/installation of permanent infrastructure) within Marine Lake; and infrastructure works including: electric substation and associated utilities works, storage/servicing yard area, external concourse/public realm areas, amended vehicular/pedestrian access (including new ramp access) and circulation areas, amended vehicle parking layout (external at grade), ecological mitigation and hard and soft landscaping.

## **Remit:**

Theatres Trust is the national advisory public body for theatres. We were established through the Theatres Trust Act 1976 'to promote the better protection of theatres' and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and theatre use in England through The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, requiring the Trust to be consulted by local authorities on planning applications which include 'development involving any land on which there is a theatre'.

## **Comment:**

Thank you for re-consulting Theatres Trust on this application following the submission of revised plans.

Since the previous application there have been slight amendments to the building's design as well as some changes to internal layout, some of which affect the theatre. We also note the

## **Theatres Trust**

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**Chair** Dave Moutrey **Director** Jon Morgan

**Trustees** Paul Cartwright, James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Lucy Osborne, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

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response by the applicant to points raised within our original comments.

We have no objections to the external amendments.

Internally similarly we have no overall objection to the revised layouts although many of our substantive concerns around the overall standards and functionality of the new theatre remain. In particular this includes, as a new-build, making the auditorium and its accessibility of exemplary design and function to accord with modern standards and expectations. On this the focus should be to further improve the range of wheelchair positions. The green room appears to be very small and we would question whether this is adequate to meet the needs of performers and shows which are anticipated.

Whilst overall there is good food and beverage provision ideally there should be bar space for audiences at the upper level as otherwise time lost travelling elsewhere in the building will undermine income potential. Similarly the positioning of the main bar on the lower ground floor is not optimal as it is below the main entrance and box office which would make the audience journey through the building convoluted, and may also have a negative impact on sales. This could be addressed by mobile bar kiosks at different locations. Some thought may be required as to how the extract and flues from the main kitchen and upper level restaurant kitchen will feed through the building and whether they can be contained within the services riser. There is potentially a conflict between the roof terrace for the restaurant and the star actor's terrace which could require screening.

The Exhibition 3 storage is within the theatre block which would make it inconvenient, and we suggest it would be beneficial for this to be given over to additional theatre back of house space. The laundry room would be better located alongside the dressing rooms for direct access and to reduce unnecessary time and movement through the building instead of alongside the offices above.

An additional comment in relation to Floral Hall would be that its decorative ceiling could be relocated to another part of the new building to help mitigate the loss of historic fabric and interest; there have been examples of this approach elsewhere such as the Assembly Rooms in Derby which incorporated a Jacobean ceiling from a house previously on the site within its foyer.

As before we can support the granting of planning permission, although we consider that further internal revisions would be beneficial. We would also suggest that this scheme would benefit from an Advisory Review for which the applicant would be encouraged to contact us to discuss further.



Tom Clarke MRTPI  
National Planning Adviser

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